ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA
Second Conference of African Statisticians
26 June 1961, Tunis
Provisional Agenda Item 5(b)

SEMINAR ON POPULATION PROBLEMS IN AFRICA

1. The Economic Commission for Africa at its third session recommended that, within its programme of work and priorities for 1961-62, a seminar on population problems should be organized in Africa (project 01-09). The Seminar is intended to bring together representatives of all countries in Africa working in the fields of demography and statistics, with other technicians or administrators working in the fields of economic and social development who would be interested in population problems in relation to economic and social planning. The Seminar is a joint project of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs at Headquarters and the Economic Commission for Africa. It will be financed from technical assistance funds.

2. The Seminar will last for two weeks, during which various problems connected with the collection, evaluation and analysis of the results of African censuses will be discussed in relation to economic and social problems of African countries. It is hoped that the seminar will serve the following purposes:

i) To assess the population problems of African countries and to bring into focus needs for more research in the demographic field in relation to the formulation of economic and social policies and the preparation of development plans.

ii) To suggest ways and means of improving the registration of vital statistics and recommend more adequate measures for obtaining vital statistics under the African conditions.

iii) To assist the census authorities in planning the tabulations of census results in such a form as to be most useful for evaluation and analysis in practical applications in the African Region.
iv) To indicate priorities for useful research and training in demographic studies in the African region and examine ways and means of promoting a regional training and research programme.

3. The Executive Secretary intends to approach the Governments of the region during the second half of 1961 regarding the location of the Seminar and the participation of African countries in this project. In nominating participants to the Seminar, the governments may wish to consider the possibility of sending officials from their census or statistical agency and from other agencies engaged in social and economic planning. It is hoped that an adequate representation of the producers and users of demographic data will be possible at the Seminar so that the meeting will provide a basis for future work in the demographic field both within the countries and in the region as a whole.

4. The justification for this Seminar cannot be over emphasized at the present moment. Numerous countries in Africa have undertaken or are in the process of undertaking large scale census operations which will provide a wealth of knowledge on the demographic and other structural characteristics of most of the population of Africa. It is also the appropriate time for the Governments in the region to give consideration to the methods and procedures that will need to be adopted to supplement work already done in the field of data collection of data and in the initiation of national programmes of evaluation, analysis and utilization of census results for social and economic planning. It is therefore hoped that the Conference will express interest in the organization of this Seminar and will recommend full participation of African statisticians in it.
Finally, one of the objectives of the Seminar will be to review the programme of regional cooperation in the field of demography, as outlined in document /CN.14/STAT/L.14, taking into consideration the views expressed by the Conference of African Statisticians. A major subject for discussion will be the organization of an African centre for research and training in demographic studies. The Conference may wish to give useful guidance to the Seminar by formulating recommendations on scope of a programme for regional cooperation in the demographic field.